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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAR (RANDALL BUDDEN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/28/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [JM](#) [XL](#)  
SUBJECT: PNP CAGEY OVER LOCAL ELECTION DATE

REF: KINGSTON 2189

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JAMES T. HEG FOR REASON 1.5(B) A  
ND (D)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) The ruling People's National Party (PNP) continues its evasiveness on when elections will finally be called. During two recent private meetings with Emboffs, however, PNP officials strongly suggested that local elections would be held in January. General elections would be held, contacts hinted, depending on the PNP's performance in local elections. Today's media, however, reported that local polls would "likely be postponed for another six months." Whether this is an elaborate game of "pin the tail on the donkey" or an indication that the PNP is seriously calculating the best approach to ensuring victory in a general election is not clear.

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TO HOLD OR NOT TO HOLD, THAT IS THE QUESTION  
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¶2. (C) Poloff recently spoke with long-time PNP supporter and Kingston area organizer Karen Cross regarding the finalization of PNP candidate selection for the general elections. The PNP held its Executive Committee meeting on November 26, but failed to select all 60 required candidates. Cross stated that the PNP was focused solely on selecting candidates who would win their constituencies by a sizable margin. Several long-time MPs who represented districts that were only won by the PNP with a small margin, were unceremoniously dumped and replaced with more popular candidates. Additionally, Cross noted that Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller wanted only candidates that shared "her vision."

¶3. (C) Poloff asked Cross when general elections would be held. Cross noted that at the Executive Committee meeting, every PNP official was dedicated to holding local elections in January. Cross stated that the outcome of the local elections would be the determining factor on when to hold national elections. Cross explained, if the PNP did very well in the local elections, the general elections would be held immediately in order to capitalize on their success. If, however, the PNP performs poorly, Cross intimated that the PNP would delay elections until the fall in order to give the PNP time to reorganize and direct their campaigning efforts.

¶4. (C) Similarly, Minister of Local Government and Environment Dean Peart strongly suggested that local elections will be held in January during a recent meeting

with AMB. When AMB asked whether or not "all attention would...be focused on cricket..." in January, Peart replied "not really." He stated that there would be "a lot going on." While he did not elaborate, he flashed a wry grin.

¶5. (U) Local media, however, is reporting that Minister of Information and Development Donald Buchanan and Peart, while not specifically stating local elections will be postponed, noted that the decision to postpone local elections would be based primarily on a report to be made to the Cabinet next Monday (December 4). In order to postpone, a bill must be submitted to parliament.

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COMMENT  
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¶6. (SBU) In the same way the U.S. puzzled over the mystery "Who Shot J.R.?" the question of when elections will be held has become a popular parlor game amongst the Kingston chattering classes. The PNP may, in fact, be engaging in a campaign of disinformation in order to keep the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) slightly off-balanced and unable to adequately plan for elections. It may also be, however, that the PNP is worried about losing power. In the last local elections (held in 2003), the JLP won 126 seats to the PNP's ¶101. The JLP also took control of 12 out of 13 local councils. Faced with those numbers, declining popularity, and ongoing scandals (reftel), the PNP may simply not have a plan in place to win any election.  
JOHNSON